

LONG BRIEFING -- PROFESSIONAL MOVEMENT AND MANAGEMENT IN THE 70's

I. Upper Movement -- A Key to Personal Management Concerns

1. Charts and Flash Messages are largely self-explanatory. Specific comments follow below.

2. Chart 1a: In the last 15 years, organizational on-duty strength in grade structure has changed in form from a pyramid to a block with a cap on it. Flow-through from GS-11 through GS-13 is vertical and largely so into GS-14. (Data: GS employees are used in this chart and succeeding ones rather than "professional" employees only, because of unavailable data in past years for the latter. However, in FY 1970, 97% of all GS personnel in grades GS-12 and above were "professionals.")

3. Chart 1b: This comparison in percentage terms shows an appreciable increase in all grades GS-12 and above during the last 5 years, with the largest percent of increase occurring in the Supergrades.

4. Chart 1d: This chart zeros in on senior grades as a category and shows a greater rate of growth in this group during the last five and ten year periods as contrasted to the rate of growth in overall on-duty strength in the same periods. The flash message says this phenomenon cannot be expected to continue.

5. Table 2a and Chart 2b: The Table is a story of significant change. Two points of significance appear:

a. Much of the increased level of projected personnel losses (predicted retirements and estimated other separations) in both the mid-officer and senior officer categories will occur between the past five and the next five years;

b. The increase in level of losses in these grade groups will be sustained in the last half of the decade, according to our predictions of future retirements, but losses will not significantly accelerate in the second half over the first half of the decade. As noted in the flash message and in Chart 1b, the aggregative effects of losses in the next decade will be of sufficient magnitude to turn over three-fourths of present senior officers and all of the mid-officers (attributable to losses within their ranks plus movement upward). Note: only [redacted] in the GS-12 and GS-13 group are expected to remain for the entire decade. Since three-fourths of the present senior officers GS-14 and above [redacted] are expected to [redacted] the next 10 years, a minimum of 600 officers must play through from ranks below those currently in the GS-12 and GS-13 grades plus as many more as will be required to offset all of the [redacted] remaining in [redacted] and GS-13 group who will not be promoted. (Assumes no lateral in-hiring at GS-12 or above level.)

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6. Table 3c: While it would be incorrect to assume there will be no future change in the number of GS-12 and above jobs, it is logical to speculate that the number is apt to decline rather than increase, barring a major change in mission or functional emphasis. For planning purposes, it is undesirable to impute arbitrary mathematical values to possible levels of change (unless so labeled). Thus, this chart reflects the planning assumption that present manpower levels will hold and promotional opportunities will correspond to vacancies. In comparing the actual annual promotion rates for the Agency during the past five years with predicted annual rates for the next ten years, we foresee no significant change developing in the next decade.

7. Chart 4a: In judging problems of succession, in relation to problems of leadership and retention of professional continuity at all levels, it should be remembered that the dimension of these problems within an organization is not only a function of numbers but a question of quality as well. And in reflecting upon quality, it should be remembered that identification of able people is only the beginning step of a developmental program. In the latter respects, this chart shows that many of our key personnel were occupants of the senior jobs since the early build-up period of the Agency. Even though the higher grades have expanded over the years, many officials have never relinquished the more responsible positions. From a developmental standpoint, it can be assumed their presence has preempted opportunities for many others in comparable or lower grades to grow through first-hand exposure to higher experiences and responsibilities.

II. Possible Problems or Conditions Ahead (Chart 5a)

1. Increased rate of movement in upper ranks during 1971-80 in some parts of the Agency may be enough to create replacement problems; yet not enough to permit sufficient upward movement and challenge in others.

a. Expected future movement in the middle and senior grade groups is at the heart of management's concern how to ensure enough movement upward and maintain a challenging service while avoiding serious disruptions in leadership and professional experience.

b. The expected level of increased future losses within the Agency as a whole, as foreseen at this point in time, should not constitute any kind of a crisis problem in succession or open up a wave of opportunities for upward movement similar to the Agency's situation in the early years of its history. Neither is the future level of increased losses so small that we can safely assume daily management will solve all future problems. At this juncture, it is logical to suppose we cannot judge, or afford to ignore, the varying impact of future losses in the various Career Services of the Agency without taking a systematic look throughout the Agency. Secondly, we should assess the resultant changes if any that should be made in Agency policies or facilities to meet the concrete needs divulged in such an inquiry. (Further personnel retrenchments or restrictions can only intensify prospective personal and management concerns with opportunities for personal development.)

2. Static or Declining Manpower Levels.

a. The Washington Post reported on 20 August 1970 that the Budget people advised the President of a possible \$10 billion deficit in FY 1971 and \$15-\$25 billion in FY 1972. The Agency is now undergoing a review how to absorb a proposed major cut in expenditures.

b. Substantial reductions of dollars in FY 1971 (and future fiscal years) may well involve further personnel reductions.

c. Reduced Agency manpower levels will produce different effects within the various Career Services.

d. Possible consequences in Agency from reduced manpower levels:

(1) Desirable effects can be achieved by utilization of personnel resources to meet priority Agency needs.

(2) Also, probable tightening will pose new dislocations and surplusing of personnel. Employee uncertainties may cause further personal apprehensions and anxieties.

3. Increased Constraints, Controls and Impersonalization.

a. We recall with nostalgia the early days. There are many reasons. They include not only our commitment to the Agency's mission but also to freedom of movement; relatively unrestricted opportunities for access to senior officials; shared and decentralized decision-making; fluid and changing organizational alignments; limited written rules, checks or controls; and ample resources to pursue new endeavors.

b. The vitality and responsiveness of the Agency's employees, as experienced in the past, are its ultimate strengths. (Agency is not a production shop requiring an optimum application of human resources to materials in maximizing output.)

(1) Even in the context of Government service, our emphasis must be the application of personal skills and knowledge to imponderables and uncertainties.

(2) While we strive to define our criteria, follow preferred practices, and maintain an intellectual discipline, much of our professionalism is within us, not in rulebooks or standard operating procedures (characteristic of some other Government activities).

c. We have witnessed, however, maturation and its consequences in many ways since the early years.

(1) Presumably, most formalized rules were developed to correct observable problems, to repeat lessons learned, or to meet external requirements.

(2) But many of the cumulative effects of these individual rules have been bureaucratic constraints with deleterious effects; e.g., tendencies toward not enough decisions to go around; emphases on immediate transactions or crises, to the detriment of organizational purposes; preserving existing activities at the expense of new requirements; growing concentration of decision-making at the top; increased layering of the super structure; and proliferation of administrative rules and regulations dictating multiple involvements and time lags in the solution of single matters (e.g., the inordinate time required to invoke a new rule).

(3) Ironically, in bureaucratic society a premium is placed upon the initiative and capability of an individual to beat the written rules while faithfully observing the unwritten rules of an organizational propriety.

d. There is a dichotomy between the need for existing rules and controls (carefully arrived at and subject to change) and individual desires for freedom of action and responsibility.

(1) Pieces of available evidence indicate that employee concerns about personal initiative, challenge, self-respect and recognition are the fundamental problems of personnel management -- not more services, overseas benefits or even money.

(a) Attrition II -- 70% of professional's terminations (mostly under 30, under GS-12, under 5 years service) were job or job related. Job reasons were not problems of supervision or working conditions, but lack of future challenge and discrepancy between personal qualifications and job requirements (which were often overstated).

(b) Other studies show comparable results: DDI Study of Terminations, Federal Government Survey of Interns and Agency Attitudinal Surveys.

(2) Perhaps as conclusive as survey findings are our own objectives of growing organizational rigidities and attempts to curb personal or career dissatisfactions.

(a) Young people given routine tasks and subject to several reviews.

(b) Increasing managerial concern about young people and trying to make their lot more palatable.

(c) Agency attempts to ease problems of upper congestion or blockage, e.g., retirement at 60.

e. We can foresee more chances of impersonalization accompanying increased formalized controls during next five years unless we can provide able young and mid-officers with more recognition, more participation in decision-making and better chances for upward movement (when-ever and wherever it will be limited within individual Career Services in the future).

4. Insufficient Personal Development to Meet Agency Needs and Provide Personal Challenge.

a. Agency line personnel managers, including the Career Services, have traditionally concentrated upon determination of assignments; giving promotions to the best qualified; and managing employees on a daily basis, within a world of work. Central personnel management has concentrated on input of highly suitable people ~~and output~~ of older employees (retirement).

b. Too little has been done in developing the many (the [redacted] staff personnel on board) through programs directly responsive to personal aspirations and capabilities -- again the vital concerns.

c. Management obviously sanctions, not opposes, personal development. We know the organizational advantages of systematic personal development, but we have developed employees haphazardly and therefore inadequately. Many reasons are apparent:

(1) During much of the Agency's history, personal development was easily accomplished without systematic planning, through the existence of plentiful opportunities for progress by employees, with potential, within the organization (horizontally and vertically).

(2) Some of the career planning efforts in the past have failed or partially failed and have left the impression that personal development means impractical, formal documents unrelated to management needs.

(3) Many have felt that personal development was being sufficiently realized through existing programs (senior schools, CT Program, Mid-Career Program, etc.).

d. Personal development of professionals (with potential for advancement to one or more grades) fundamentally means providing needed experiences for new and more responsible duties in the future. This approach benefits both the Agency and its employees. How much development should be going on in any one year within each Career Service (or a Directorate or the Agency) is a practical consideration, based upon expected future opportunities for upward movement. Such determinations should not be left to chance (as occurs when the best available employees are picked for assignments and training courses at the time these situations arise).

5. Mismatching of Employee Qualifications and Job Requirements.

a. The de facto relationship between job requirements and employee skill levels is influential in obtaining either employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction and effective employee utilization or misutilization. (Employee expectations about the future are closely tied to his qualifications.)

b. An equilibrium in matching people and jobs is neither totally possible or desirable in a mobile organization.

(1) For example, getting a job done may require: Using a senior officer in lower graded position, perhaps the field, to meet a priority need or assigning a task force of professionals to a project without concern for their personal involvement in duties that have to be performed; assigning well-qualified college graduates to professional positions, which may include some recurring menial tasks.

(2) Few officers, regardless of grade level, fully escape routine activities, and no amount of job design can eliminate them entirely.

c. While we must attend to whatever needs to be done the most and shift employees as required to meet changing demands, we should be alert to the causes of continuing imbalance between employee qualifications and job needs -- causes that can have an unhealthy effect in time on employee satisfaction and effective utilization. For example:

(1) Escalating, inflating and misrepresenting duties and specifying unnecessary or false personal skills or experience requirements.

(2) Failing to keep T/O and ceiling totals in balance. Under conditions of rigid manpower controls, maintaining a disproportionate number of professional positions versus clerical jobs relative to the actual kind of work that has to be done.

(3) Misassigning professionals to clerical or technical jobs (may be mislabeled as professional positions) or conversely preempting predominantly professional jobs by misassigning clericals or technicals to them.

(4) Depending heavily upon highly selective recruitment and evaluation methods and standards for obtainment of the best personnel available (under a career orientation approach) and then assigning them to routine tasks which have little bearing on their capabilities or are "busy work" jobs or tasks which no one else wants to do.

d. When employees can observe a continuing pattern of misrepresented or mislabeled jobs, and misutilization of personal skill levels or overhiring for the level of work to be done, a chronic condition of employee dissatisfaction and wasted talents can occur. If the pattern is continued or exacerbated and professional officers (especially the young) see only restricted opportunities ahead for upward movement, the problem can become critical in one or several places within an organization.

e. There is evidence the Agency has jobs called professional that are more nearly sub-professional or technical in fact. There are indications that more employees should be hired at the sub-professional or technical levels to perform tasks at these skill levels. Providing employees with job careers comparable to their interests and skill levels and confining the number and use of highly selected individuals for positions and career paths that are largely professional and challenging increase career satisfactions at all levels.

f. For the next several years, we face the possibility of further impediments to proper matching of people and jobs because of continued limitations on opportunities for personal movement upward; manpower restrictions and shifts in skill requirements (occasioned by future technological and functional changes). These possibilities warrant a detailed look to see where the problems are and what actions should be taken, including changes in our hiring standards for certain jobs or groups of jobs (within or across Career Service lines).